

REMARKS:

- 1) Referring to item 10 of the Office Action Summary, the Examiner is respectfully requested to approve the formal drawing that was originally filed with this application on March 16, 2001.
- 2) Entry and consideration of the present amendments and remarks after Final are respectfully requested. These amendments and remarks are directly responsive to the issues raised for the first time in the Final Office Action based on the new grounds of rejection. This is applicant's first opportunity to reply to those new grounds of rejection. The present amendments place the application into condition for allowance based on the indicated allowable subject matter, without raising any new issues that would require additional consideration or a new search.
- 3) Referring to section 7 on page 5 of the Office Action, the allowance of claims 19 to 21 is appreciated. Those claims are maintained without amendment and should still stand allowed.
- 4) Referring to section 6 on page 5 of the Office Action, the indication of allowable subject matter in claims 7 to 9 is appreciated. The features of claims 7 and 9 have been incorporated as alternative limitations into present amended independent claim 1. Claim 1 now requires that the at least one elastomer comprises at least one elastomer selected from among the first blend elastomers (according to claim 7) and the second blend elastomers (according to claim 9). Thus, claim 1 has been

limited to the allowable subject matter and should now be allowable. Claims 7 and 9 have been maintained, individually reciting the alternatives of amended claim 1, namely that the elastomer must comprise at least one first blend elastomer according to claim 7, or must comprise at least one second blend elastomer according to claim 9. Dependent claims 3 and 6 have been amended for proper conformance with the amended independent claim. For these reasons, independent claim 1 and claims 3 to 18 depending therefrom should now be allowable.

- 5) Referring to sections 4 and 5 on pages 2 to 5 of the Office Action, the prior art rejections have been obviated by the incorporation of the allowable subject matter of claims 7 and 9 into independent claim 1. Thus, the prior art rejections cannot be maintained and should be withdrawn.
- 6) Favorable reconsideration and allowance of the application, including all claims 1 and 3 to 21, are respectfully requested.

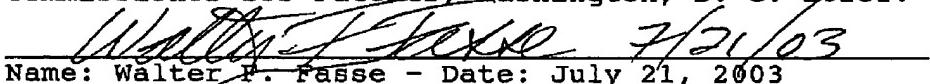
Respectfully submitted,
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CERTIFICATE OF FAX TRANSMISSION:

I hereby certify that this correspondence with all indicated enclosures is being transmitted by telefax to (703) 872-9311 on the date indicated below, and is addressed to: Assistant Commissioner for Patents, Washington, D. C. 20231.


Name: Walter F. Fasse - Date: July 21, 2003

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